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AUTHOR Carriedo, Ruben; Goren, Paul
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ABSTRACT

This policy study addresses the issue of double-session versus single-session kindergarten in a large urban school district facing school facility needs. The current policy on kindergarten offerings is to conduct single-session kindergarten whenever possible. Ninety-two of the school district's 105 elementary schools currently offer single-session kindergarten. Double-session kindergarten is offered in a limited number of schools because of overcrowding and shortage of facilities. The analysis found a disparity in instructional minutes districtwide and a disproportionate negative impact on instructional minutes for schools with high percentages of racial or ethnic minorities. Based on these findings, the district staff recommends implementation of double-session kindergartens in all schools, with few exceptions, to eliminate existing disparities and to provide additional facilities. (Author/PCB)

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POLICY ANALYSIS ON DOUBLE-SESSION VERSUS SINGLE-SESSION KINDERGARTEN

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT REPORT

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Planning, Research, and Evaluation Division
Planning Department

POLICY ANALYSIS ON DOUBLE-SESSION VERSUS SINGLE-SESSION KINDERGARTEN: LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

November 21, 1986

Abstract

This policy study addresses the issue of double-session versus single-session kindergarten in a large urban school district facing school facility needs. The current policy on kindergarten offerings is to conduct single-session kindergarten whenever possible. Ninety-two of the school district's 105 elementary schools currently offer single-session kindergarten. Double-session kindergarten is offered in a limited number of schools because of overcrowding and shortage of facilities. The analysis found a disparity in instructional minutes districtwide and a disproportionate negative impact for schools with high percentages of racial/ethnic minorities. Based on these findings, staff recommends implementation of double-session kindergartens in all schools, with few exceptions, to equalize existing disparities and to provide additional facilities.

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
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POLICY ANALYSIS ON DOUBLE-SESSION VERSUS SINGLE-SESSION KINDERGARTEN: LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

November 21, 1986

Executive Summary

I. Issue/Concern

What should the district policy be on double-session versus single-session kindergarten?

II. Background

The development of a Long-Range Facility Master Plan in the San Diego Unified School District, which projects enrollment growth of 45,000 by the year 2000, prompted the district to examine double-session versus single-session kindergarten and their impact on facilities use.

III. Findings

- Single-session kindergarten is offered in 92 of 105 elementary schools.
- The few schools offering double-session kindergarten primarily serve minority students.
- Students in single-session kindergarten receive more instructional time than students in double-session kindergarten, creating a disparity in districtwide kindergarten offerings.
- Single-session kindergarten has a negative impact on facility use throughout the district.

IV. Recommendations

District staff recommends the adoption of double-session kindergarten for all schools, with few exceptions, based on equity and facility utilization considerations.

Report prepared by Ruben Carriedo and Paul Goren

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
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POLICY ANALYSIS ON DOUBLE-SESSION VERSUS SINGLE-SESSION KINDERGARTEN: LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

November 21, 1986

Issue/Concern

What should the district policy be on double-session versus single-session kindergarten? Cabinet developed a short-term recommendation on this issue for the 1986-87 school year. This analysis provides a long-term recommendation on kindergarten offerings for school years subsequent to 1986-87.

Background

Following the cabinet adoption of a short-term policy for double-session versus single-session kindergarten, cabinet directed the Planning Department to make a long-term recommendation in the context of the Long-Range Facilities Master Plan. The Planning Department developed several central questions to guide this analysis of district kindergarten offerings.

1. How is the kindergarten program defined?

2. What is current district practice in its offering of single and double-session kindergarten?

3. Is current district practice in regard to the implementation of the kindergarten program consistent with district policy and state law?

4. Is current practice equitable?

5. What is the relationship between current kindergarten policy and practice and district facilities utilization?

This report addresses these central questions in order to reconcile district practice with district policy, state law, equity and facility considerations. The report concludes with a long-term recommendation to be considered in the context of the Long-Range Facilities Master Plan.

Methodology

An initial analysis on double-session versus single-session kindergarten was presented to cabinet on September 15, 1986. That study was based on site observations in classrooms, kindergarten teacher interviews, document review and interviews with 13 central office administrators. These initial data were supplemented by additional document review including: "Guidelines for Implementing the 240-Minute Kindergarten Program" (San Diego City Schools, 1984); California Education Code 46111 "Maximum kindergarten school day"; Administrative Procedure No. 4024 "Double-Session, K-6"; Information Circular 194 - "Implementing the 240-minute Instructional Day for Kindergarten, Semester II, 1984-85"

(May 2, 1984); and Administrative Circular No. 286 "Length of the Instructional Day" (June 12, 1984). Additional information was collected from the School Operations Division on instructional minutes offered in the district kindergarten program.

Discussion

Kindergarten Program

The district's kindergarten program is not clearly defined. It is considered in three ways. First, kindergarten is defined in terms of the curriculum offered. The district "Guidelines for Implementing the 240-Minute Kindergarten Program" defines the program to include the following offerings: Physical Education, Reading/ESL, Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Health/Safety, Computer Literacy and Fine Arts. The curriculum is designed to address the physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth of the child.

The second consideration is in regard to instructional minutes/length of the school day. State law defines the kindergarten program in terms of maximum permissable time in school for kindergarten students. "No pupil in a kindergarten shall be kept in school in any day more than four hours exclusive of recesses." (California Education Code 46111). The district defines the minimum kindergarten offering in terms of instructional minutes: 200 minutes per day first semester and 240 minutes per day second semester. Double-session kindergarten is defined by the district as 200 minutes per day of instructional time. (Information Circular No. 194 "Implementing the 240-Minute Instructional Day for Kindergarten, Semester II, 1984-85", 5/2/84). In addition, the Superior Court of California ordered the district to provide "full-day" kindergarten (200 minutes first semester/240 second semester) to 23 minority isolated schools (Carlin v. Board of Education, Superior Court of California 303800, final order 5/21/85, paragraph 9).

A third consideration for defining the kindergarten program relates to facility utilization. More specifically, the kindergarten program can be implemented in two forms--single-session and double-session. These terms refer to whether the kindergarten program is being offered only once a day or once in the morning and once in the afternoon. An additional consideration is whether or not one classroom is used daily by one kindergarten session or two kindergarten sessions.

The lack of a clear definition of the kindergarten program explains the lack of consistency between the kindergarten curriculum, instructional minutes and facility use. For instance, the district-adopted kindergarten curriculum is for single-session and does not provide for double-session even though double-session kindergarten exists. Furthermore, the kindergarten curriculum with its prescribed number of minutes per curricular area does not address unequal availability of classroom facilities.

Current Practice

Currently the district's policy is to offer single-session kindergarten whenever possible (Administrative Procedure 4024). An analysis of all four School Operations Division areas indicates that single-session kindergarten is offered in 92 of 105 schools (Table I). Eleven of fourteen schools where double-session kindergarten is offered serve large numbers of minority students. Double-session kindergartens have been established in these selected schools because of facility constraints.

Instructional Minutes Offered in Kindergarten Programs

Instructional minutes for kindergarten vary dramatically throughout the district. Currently there are 39 different versions of single-session kindergarten ranging from 39,600 yearly instructional minutes to 64,800 yearly instructional minutes (Table I). Only 17 schools offer the 200 minutes per day first semester and 240 minutes per day second semester model prescribed in the newly adopted curriculum guide for kindergarten. Four different versions of double-session kindergarten exist in the district, including 200 minutes per day first semester/200 minutes per day second semester, 210/210, 220/220, and 210/240. These double-session options range from 36,000 annual instructional minutes to 40,500 instructional minutes offered each year.

These data appear to indicate some level of school autonomy in planning the kindergarten program. This kind of school autonomy may not be possible in an era of enrollment growth, limited facilities and declining resources. If some form of school autonomy is considered valuable in the kindergarten program, perhaps that autonomy should relate to content of curriculum rather than length of the school day.

Practice in Regard to Policy and Law

Current district practice is most consistent with the kindergarten program as defined by facility use. More specifically, single-session kindergarten is offered to all students when facilities allow. Double-session kindergarten is offered only when facilities limitations do not permit single-sessions.

Current practice is less consistent with district policy on the length of the instructional day in the kindergarten program. This inconsistency exists because the district has defined only the minimum number of minutes for single- and double-session kindergarten and not the maximum. What results is a wide variety of kindergarten offerings in the district and an unequal availability of the program for all students. Under current district practice, one kindergarten student on a 200/200 schedule may receive as much as 28 weeks less instruction than another kindergartener who is on a 360/360 schedule.

District practice is also inconsistent with state law as it relates to the kindergarten instructional day, although it must be noted that San Diego County is exempt from the law. The Education Code refers to the kindergarten day and not to instructional or non-instructional kindergarten offerings. State law defines the kindergarten day as not to exceed 240 minutes excluding recess. Currently more than 38 of the 105 report-ing schools have kindergarten days over 240 minutes. There is an apparent effort by schools to lengthen the kindergarten day and increase the academic requirements of the kindergarten curriculum. Although San Diego County is exempt from current law, there needs to be a review of the district's current practice. This needs to be reviewed in light of the intent of state law and the philosophical basis of what a kindergarten program should be.

Equity

Current practice is not equitable if equity is defined to mean all students have equal access to the same program offerings. Not only is there an inequity between double- and single-session kindergarten, but there are inequities within single- and double-session offerings. (See Table I)

Kindergarten/Facility Utilization Relationship

Current district policy and practice have a negative effect on facility utilization in the district. The heavy preponderance of single-session kindergartens precludes the optimum use of classrooms, especially when space is limited. It should be noted with regard to state standards, which are important when the district applies for funding from the state building program, that kindergarten classrooms need to be used in a double-session configuration.

Analysis

Ultimately the district is forced to address the tension that arises from program quality versus the efficient use of facilities. Can the district afford single-session kindergarten if it means having to buy additional portable classrooms and possibly jeopardizing participation in the state building program to provide a kindergarten program of high quality? The district needs to design a kindergarten program that addresses program quality and facility utilization in a manner that provides equitable offerings to all students. This report's recommendtions are based on the following statements:

1. Equity - There should be one kindergarten program and all students should have equal access to it.

2. Facilities Utilization - Double-session kindergarten uses school facilities more efficiently than single-session and complies with state standards.

3. State Law - The kindergarten instructional day should be consistent with state law.

4. District Policy - Policy and practice on the kindergarten program should be consistent.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the district adopt the following policy:

   The San Diego Unified School District shall provide double-session kindergarten in all elementary schools effective for the 1987-88 school year.

   The kindergarten day shall be defined as 220 minutes during the first and second semesters, except for minority isolated schools and extended day magnets where single session kindergarten will be continued.

2. An implementation team needs to be appointed to develop a plan to implement this policy. The plan should include guidelines to principals for implementation including scheduling and "overlap" activities. The team also needs to align the current 200/240 curriculum to the 220/220 model.

   The adoption of the first recommendation means a change in current district policy. The adoption of the second establishes a process for implementing the new policy.

The double-session 220 minute recommendation is a compromise that addresses maintenance of program quality, equity, and consistency with the Education Code and state standards for facilities use. The 220 minute day for both semesters would be equal in total instructional minutes to the 200/240 day upon which the current kindergarten curriculum is based. All students would have equal access to the same kindergarten program. The instructional day would be consistent with the Education Code and the double-session organization of the kindergarten would use district facilities according to state standards.

The implementation of this policy may require overlap between the two sessions, not a desirable situation but one that has existed before in the district during facilities crises.

It should also be noted that the 220 minute double-session kindergarten program may result in a different and potentially more expensive transportation schedule than the one which currently exists. The proposed policy should be adopted on the basis of equity, program quality, Education Code and state standards consistency, and on the assumption that additional transportation costs will be less than leasing, buying, or moving portable classrooms, or building new schools.

Report prepared by Ruben Carriedo and Paul Goren

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TABLE 1
Summary of 1986-87 Kindergarten Schedules*

Single Session Kindergarten			Double Session Kindergarten		
Sem.1/Sem.2 Daily Minutes	Yearly Inst.Minutes	Number of Schools	Sem.1/Sem.2 Daily Minutes	Yearly Inst.Minutes	Number of Schools
200/240	(39,600)	17	200/200	(36,000)	10
205/240	(40,050)	2	2IO/200	(36,900)	1
210/240	(40,500)	6	210/210	(37,800)	1
220/240	(41,400)	3	220/220	(39,600)	1
210/250	(41,400)	2			
205/255	(41,400)	1			
240./240	(43,200)	17			
255/225	(43,200)	1			
210/270	(43,200)	1			
225/260	(43,450)	1			
242/242	(43,560)	1			
200/285	(43,650)	1			
244/244	(43,920)	2			
200/268	(43,920)	1			
245/245	(44,100)	3			
250/250	(45,000)	1			
252/252	(45,360)	1			
256/256	(46,080)	1			
260/260	(46,800)	3			
262/262	(47,160)	2			
263/263	(47,340)	1			
264/264	(47,520)	1			
265/265	(47,700)	1			
270/270	(48,600)	2			
275/275	(49,500)	3			
280/280	(50,400)	1			
285/285	(51,300)	1			
290/290	(52,200)	3			
296/296	(53,280)	1			
310/310	(55,800)	1			
311/3II	(55,980)	1			
320/320	(57,600)	1			
325/325	(58,500)	1			
328/328	(59,040)	1			
360/360	(64,800)	2			
210/		1			
215/		1			
240/		1			
/245		1			
		92			13

Double Session Kindergarten has:
5 different semester/minute configurations
5 different yearly instruction minute configurations

One Week Instruction Double Session (200/200) = 1,000 minutes

Single Session Kindergarten has:
39 different semester/minute configurations
32 different yearly instructional minute configurations

One Week Instruction Single Session (200/240) = 1,100 minutes

* Includes 105 elementary schools in four operational areas. A school may be listed more than once if it conducts both double and single sessions.

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